

A
T R E A T I S E
U P O N
C O N V I C T I O N
O F
S I N.

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The SECOND EDITION.

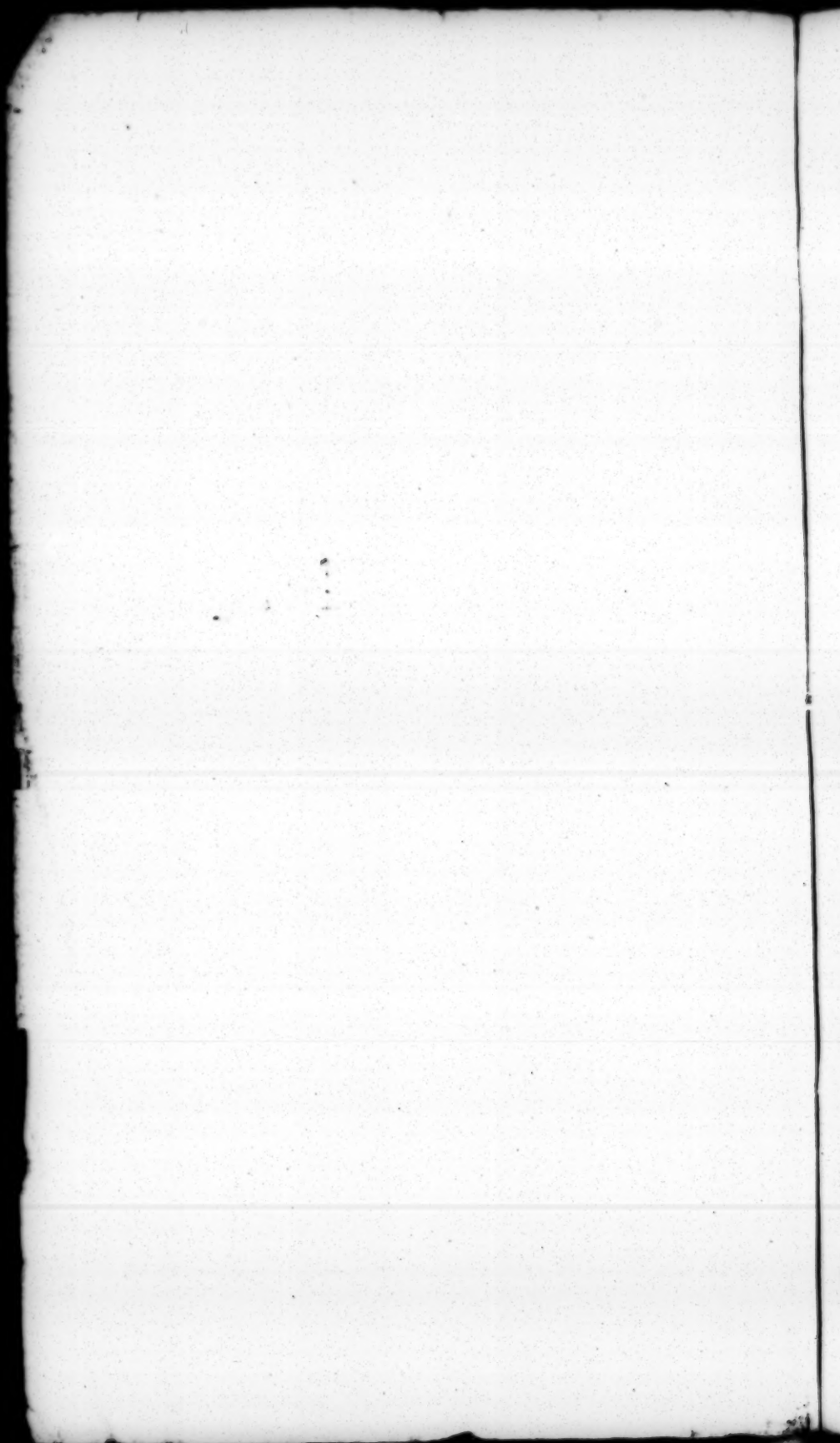


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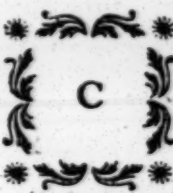
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CONCERNING
CONVICTION
OF
S I N.

 Conviction of Sin is a full, abiding, practical Discovery made in our Mind by the Holy Ghost, through the Word, that as well by Nature, through the Fall of our First Father and Covenant-head, as by Thought, Word, and Deed, we are altogether Sinners before God, and deserve that everlasting Wrath which the Law denounces against Sin. Which Discovery, wherever it is effectually made, is accompanied with a sincere Purpose and determined Readiness to flee from the Wrath to come, by an Acceptance of Salvation upon any Terms on which it shall please God to offer it.

IN this Description three Things offer themselves to be considered,

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I. THE Fact of SIN.

II. THE Discovery thereof by the Spirit; and

III. THE Effect of that Discovery.

SECT. I.

Of the Fact of SIN.

SIN is a Transgression of the Law of God, and is either Original, or Actual the Fruit of Original.

ORIGINAL SIN.

ORIGINAL SIN is a State of Soul transgressing the whole Law in its proper and spiritual meaning, for,

1. THERE is therein the very Essence of all that Sin which by the Law, considered in or according to its spiritual meaning, is forbidden.

2. THERE is therein a Want or Absence of all those spiritual Dispositions and Duties which by the Law are required.

1st, THERE is in Original Sin, or, which is the same, in our Nature, as corrupted by the Fall, the very Essence of all that Sin which by the Law, considered in or according

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According to its spiritual meaning, is forbidden.

FOR our Nature since the Fall is essentially earthly, sensual, devilish; insomuch that under the Influence thereof the whole Wisdom that a Man naturally has in his Understanding, the whole deliberate and freest Choice of his Will, together with the whole Bent and Exercise of his Affections, is always one or other of these. And in Consequence hereof he lies under a moral Impossibility either of discerning, willing, or effecting any one the least spiritual or divine thing, so that while he is left to himself he is in utter spiritual Darkness, he acts under a Choice that is always perverse, and is in a constant Pursuit of those Things which are purely of this World.

THIS is properly a Child of Disobedience, and in him the Devil ruleth at his Will, purely by means of this corrupted sinful Nature, by perpetually pleasing, through delusive Imaginations, which he is constantly impressing upon such a one's Mind, and thereby stirring up Concupiscence, and pushing it into act.

FROM this Account of the positive Iniquity of Man's Nature, it appears to have in it, as was said above, the very Essence of all that Sin which is forbidden by the Law, which is also proveable from another Consideration of it, for a Nature which in the

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whole of its Knowledge, Choice and Pursuits, is fixed upon Things earthly, &c. is evidently selfish, having in the whole but one object, self-gratification: and if our Nature be thus purely selfish, thereby it expresses the strongest Enmity against GOD and our Neighbour, the Love of the one and the other of whom, CHRIST teaches us, is the Sum of the Law; the contrary is therefore forbidden in all the Commandments.

2dly, THERE is in our Nature, as corrupted by the Fall, a Want or Absence of all Dispositions to, or Abilities for those spiritual Duties which are required by the Law.

INDEED according to the Account just now given this cannot but be; for, 1. If our natural Wisdom sees and can see nothing but what is of a worldly sort, then consequently there cannot be in our Understanding *any* Knowledge of GOD; nor, 2. can there be of course any Choice of him in our Will; nor, 3. any going out of the Affections after him. So that of Necessity in the Nature of Man there is Ignorance of GOD, no Choice of him, nor any Fear, Love, Trust, Desire after or Delight in him. But it is manifest such a Knowledge of GOD, Choice of him, or being thus affected towards him, are plainly required as the very Essence or Substance of all those Duties which are enjoined us by the Law. In this
Condition

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Condition we have not God for our God, but have other Gods before him ; we cannot worship him in the Spirit, we worship the Creature altogether, we do not honour him but ourselves, and the Day in the Week which he has separated for his Service, is entirely dedicated to our Lusts.

WHILE we have been thus describing what is meant by Original Sin, two Things evidently offer themselves as resulting from it.

1. THAT the State of Original Sin is,

1st, A STATE of spiritual Blindness, out of which we cannot deliver ourselves by the Help of our own unassisted Reason, and that both because the Sinfulness of our Nature perpetually engages our Attention to Things earthly, sensual, or devilish ; and also because the unassisted Faculty of Reason has no Power of discerning God in any of his Works. And here let it be remarked that a competent Experience of this natural Blindness, can be the only Foundation of our submitting to be taught of God.

2^{dly}, THAT it is a State of Guilt, because a Transgression of the whole Law. And here also we must take notice, that seeing we are by Nature Children of Wrath, primarily guilty before God, because of this Original Sin that dwells in us ; therefore whatever Experience we may have of other Guilt, yet if we are unacquainted with the

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Guilt of Original Sin, we shall not be prepared in a Renunciation of our own Righteousness to accept the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.

3dly, THAT it is a State of Impotence as to all Conversion towards God, both because God being unknown, there can be no Motive to turn unto him, and also because under the Bias of corrupt Nature the Will does freely and continually choose only the Things that are contrary to him. And here again it must be observed, that it is inconceivable how, without a competent Experience of this natural Impotency, we can be disposed to seek for or submit unto the converting and sanctifying Influences of the holy Spirit.

2. FROM this Account of Original Sin we are taught what is a State of Sin. That it is a State and Condition wherein sinful Nature directs and governs the whole Man, by perpetually suggesting its Desires to the Mind, which readily entertains and approves of them, while in the mean time the Will heartily consents to and determines for them. Here it must be observed,

1st, THAT in this State Acts of Sin are continually brought forth, either *inwardly* in the Heart by the Will's consenting to the Motion of corrupt Nature; which done, there is an actual Sin committed in the Sight of the heart-searching God, and that inward

ward Sin becomes more sinful in proportion as the sinful Object fixes itself upon the Soul, and Desire waits for the Opportunity of external Indulgence; or *outwardly*, in Word or Deed, proceeding from such inward Desires and Inclinations.

2dly, THAT in this State the Soul for the most part knows not the Sin that it is continually committing. Indeed as to outward Sins of a more hainous Nature, and the grosser Tempers of the Heart, that exert themselves with a sensible Violence, a Man lying in a State of Sin may be reprov'd by his Conscience; but then he never sees these as Proofs and Evidences of his being in a State of Sin, the Enmity against GOD and the whole spiritual Iniquity that excites him to this Conduct, and constitutes him a Sinner before GOD, being entirely hid from his Eyes. And,

3dly, THAT even what he does know of these outward or inward Sins, he is without Power to deliver himself from. Natural Men have for the most part a Conscience which reprov's and condemns them for certain Parts of their Conduct; under the Influence of this Reproof they are apt to form Resolutions, but always find them unsuccessful. Thus much of the Fact of Sin.

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S E C T. II.

Of the Discovery of the Fact of Sin by the
S P I R I T.

WHatever be the Fact of our Sinfulness by Nature and Practice, yet we never see it to any good Purpose till the Spirit, by means of the Word, discovers it unto us. Natural Men are therefore said to be *dead in Trespasses and Sins*, seeing no more of their State and Condition than Men lying in their Graves. They are compared also to Persons asleep, who for the present are without any Sense of what they are, and therefore when a Discovery is made to them of the Truth of their Case, they are resembled to Persons that are *awakened out of Sleep*. Now this Discovery, whereby a Man is brought to see the real Fact of his Sinfulness is, we say, from the Spirit of God: and it must be so, because it is the Discovery of a spiritual matter; but *the natural Man knoweth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*. And that this Discovery is from the Spirit, may also farther be made evident by Experience. For whereas the Soul, whatever speculative Knowledge it might have of Sin, did before this Discovery pay no Attention or Regard to it, and when at any Time it had seen a
little

little of what it was, like a man beholding his natural Face in the Glass, did depart and forget ; now when it is under the powerful Illumination of the Spirit it finds it all otherwise, the Object is fixed upon the Mind, the Man cannot turn away his Eyes from his Sins ; not only present or late Acts of Transgression engage the Attention, but what he had long ago forgotten is brought to his Remembrance, and Sins which he before thought little appear now in a very different manner.

To exemplify this by a few Scripture Instances. The Persons who had either directly or indirectly born a Part in the horrible Crime of the Murder of the Son of God, though possibly they might not be without some Suspicion that they had acted a wicked Part therein, yet, as far as it appears, they seem to have been easy and quiet enough about the matter ; but at the Feast of *Pentecost*, when *Peter* explained to them the Enormity of that Crime, we find a Multitude of those very Persons deeply alarmed and affected, or, as it is expressed, *pricked at their Hearts*. Now whence arose so strange an Alteration ? why, the Spirit on that Day, most plentifully vouchsafed both to the Speaker and the Hearers, opened the Eyes of their Understanding, and softened the Hardness of their Hearts, that they saw plainly what they had done, and how sinful
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an Estate they were in, who could be capable of such a Conduct. That the effectual Sight and Sense of Sin is from the Spirit, is very observable also from the Case of *Peter* but a little before: He had repeatedly denied his Master. Some Space of Time intervened between the Denials; why did he not see his Fault after the first or second Denial, or why not after the third, till CHRIST looked upon him? He was in the same free Use of his Reason before, as then; and yet you see, till the Spirit, the Fulness of whom dwelt in CHRIST, set his Sin home upon his Heart, he took no manner of Notice of it. All this sufficiently shews that a true Discovery of Sin is by the Spirit; and signifies to us, that we should be upon our guard against such merely rational Knowledge of Sin as does not habitually represent us to ourselves in our true Character, and has no practical Influence issuing from it.

IN Places where the Gospel is preached, and of course Original Sin, in its Nature and Consequences, is frequently and fully opened, there will doubtless be found many who have a clear speculative Knowledge of these Matters, and are perhaps zealous for the Truth of them, while nevertheless they are not convinced to any profitable Purpose, that these Things are indeed so. It may not be amiss therefore to shew the Difference between such a merely rational and a divine Conviction.

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Conviction of Sin, as it lies in the very Nature of the Conviction itself.

FIRST, Conviction merely rational is imperfect and undecisive, attended with gain-saying and doubting of Mind, but a divine Conviction comes with such full Evidence, as leaves the Soul without any Doubt of the Truth of its Case. Of this latter sort was the Conviction of the Jailer, when he cried out, *Acts xvi. 30. Sirs, What must I do to be saved?* while that of King Agrippa, *Acts xxvi. 28. Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*, seems to be the Result of mere reasoning.

A second Mark of Distinction is this, that rational Conviction never goes far into the Heart, so as to leave any deep and lasting Impressions there of the Things whereof the Soul seems to be in a manner convinced; whereas a spiritual Conviction concerning Sin leaves the Impression of Sin abidingly upon the Conscience: thus *David* said, *Psal. li. 3. My Sin is ever before me.* Whilst his Adversary *Saul* could upon Occasion confess, *1 Sam. xxvi. 21. I have sinned*, and yet quickly after forget that he had done so.

A third Mark of Difference is the different Moment and Importance with which these things affect the Mind. Where the Conviction is truly divine, the things whereof the Soul is convinced appear momentous beyond comparison, as was the Case of
St

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St Paul at his Conversion; being convinced of what he had been and done, he was so affected with the Sight, that he fell to the Ground, *Acts ix. 6. trembling and astonished,* and asked the Lord, *What wilt thou have me to do?*

S E C T. III.

The Effects of this Discovery.

THESE are three, 1. A Consciousness of Guilt. 2. An Acknowledgment of the Desert of Punishment. 3. A Readiness and Determination to flee from the Wrath that is to come, by accepting Salvation upon any Terms.

1st Effect, The Consciousness of Guilt which divine Conviction fixes upon the Heart. When Sin is committed, there is Guilt contracted in the Sight of GOD, so the whole World is said to be guilty before GOD, but although all are in fact guilty before GOD, yet none are sensible to any purpose that they are so, until the Spirit by convincing them of the Sinfulness of Sin in GOD's Sight begets upon their Consciences a Knowledge or Sense that they are guilty Creatures in GOD's Account. To be guilty as a Transgressor of the Law is one thing,
and

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and to be *found* guilty of it before GOD's Judgment is another, which will be the unhappy Lot of all who die in their Sins. But that only which is of any saving Efficacy is to be found guilty now in our Consciences, so that we may regard ourselves as those who have transgressed the Law, and are fallen under the Penalty of it. It is a main Point in Conviction of Sin, that a Man holds and judges himself guilty before GOD because of Sin, Sin of every Kind and Species that he is chargeable with, whether Sin of Omision or Sin of Commission, or whether it be outward Sin in Words and Actions, or whether it be inward Sin in the Desires and Thoughts of the Heart ; or finally, and before all, and above all, and as the Foundation of all, that he judge himself guilty simply and independently of every other Cause of Guilt, because of that Original Sin, that State of Departure from, and Opposition to the whole Law of GOD, which naturally dwelleth in him.

SUCH a Sense of Guilt, and upon such Foundations, especially that of Original Sin, David expressees in this manner ; *I acknowledge my Transgression, and my Sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this Evil in thy Sight. Behold, I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me ; behold, thou desirest Truth in the inward Parts.*

BUT

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BUT concerning this Part of our Subject, *viz.* a Sense of Guilt, or Obnoxiousness to Punishment, it may be useful to observe, that though it will always be found where a true divine Conviction of Sin is, and makes an essential Part of it; yet is there often a considerable Degree of it which infers no such thing. It is plain from the Case of *Abab* and *Judas*, and many others recorded in Scripture, that Men may have some stinging Sense of Guilt, of their Liableness to Wrath, especially for some particular Sins, who notwithstanding never attain unto a saving Conviction of Sin. And this, it is to be feared, is every Day the Case of many, who stop in Awakenings and a galling Sense of Guilt arising merely from particular Transgressions, while, in the mean time, having never seen the Fact of their fallen Nature, they have never seen the most distinguished and eminent Part of their Guilt, and so never arrive unto an inward and saving Conversion; but catch hastily at some false Relief from their Distress, and rest in something or other miscalled Faith, while they are intirely void of the Thing itself, *viz.* a living Principle which purifies the Heart.

2. THE second Effect of a divine Conviction represented in Scripture is an undisputing and practical Acknowledgment of the Desert of all Sin. A Man may be persuaded

ed he has transgressed the Law of God, and that for so doing he is become guilty, and fallen under the Curse of the same, when at the same time there is not the least Conviction in his Mind that such Curse is what he really *deserves*. This Difference is greatly to be noted. For as a Man who is under Sentence of Death for Crimes against the State may be, and often is under great Agonies and Horrors because of the Punishment which he sees plain enough the Law has allotted him to endure, while in any other View he has not the least Concern about, or Apprehension of the Crime which brings this Punishment upon him: so a Man brought to the Knowledge of his Sins may have great Dread within his Soul from an Expectation of the divine Wrath; who is not at all sensible of the *Evil* of those Sins which procure that Wrath. Such seems to have been the Case of *Cain*, when, from a View merely of his Sufferings, unaccompanied with any Sense how justly they were inflicted, he appears murmuringly to have cried out, *My Punishment is greater than I can bear*. And this doubtless was the Case of *Judas*, who in a Fit of Pride, Rage and Despair, went and hanged himself. As this is a Matter of singular Importance, it may be proper to set down a Mark or two whereby this guilty, but yet selfish, unconvinced, unhumiliated Spirit, may be discerned and distinguished.

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tinguished. As, 1. It may easily be discerned by that *total unthankfulness of Heart* which always accompanies it. In Persons under a mere Sense of Guilt and Dread of Punishment, you will evidently discover, that there is not the least Appearance of Thankfulness upon their Hearts for God's long Forbearance with them under their great and manifold Iniquities, for his Mercy to them in not suffering them to go on in a stupid Unconcern, but calling them by his Terrors, as well as by other Motives, to awake and arise from the Dead; for his still daily Patience with them, and for all the means he is continually using to bring them to a thorough Conviction and Conversion. None of these Things make the least Impression of Gratitude upon the Hearts of such Persons, and of Consequence they are Strangers to every Degree of Self-condemnation and Self-loathing for all they have done against him.

2. THIS State of the Soul will make itself known by a Spirit of *Impatience*. It wants to be rid of its Distress; it wants to have Peace and Comfort given it, and it must have them speedily, or it grows fretful under the Delay, or in other Words it knows not how to wait for God's Gifts, but, as if they were no Gifts at all, seems to demand them as a Due, and is for appointing unto God the Time and Manner of his distri-

distributing them. And as it is thus impatiently querulous against God himself, and presumptuously expostulating, Why is he so long in coming to deliver me? so does it also rise up against the discreetest and most affectionate Endeavours of Christian Ministers or Friends for its Relief. If indeed he who takes upon him the kind Office of ministering Advice, could in a Moment rid a Person in this State of his Fears, by conveying into his Soul instant and full Assurance that all his Sins are forgiven, and that he shall never suffer the Torments he is in dread of, this would satisfy; but inasmuch as this is not at any Time in the Power of Man, and if it was, such a Person is in a State absolutely unprepared for such a Blessing, all that is said besides, however suitable to his Case, and however tending in due Time to bring^e him to the Enjoyment of all the Relief he wants, is heard without Attention, and with a secret, if not an open Fretfulness and Anger against it, which peevish Spirit also fails not to shew itself in the general Conduct.

3. A third Mark, is *murmuring* against God's Dealings and Judgments, as though they were severe. Far from conceiving from all God's Dispensations towards him, the least Thought of his being gracious and merciful, the Person we are speaking of thinks the divine Treatment of him cruel and unjust

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just. As this sometimes discovers itself most openly and avowedly, so at other times when it is neither seen nor owned by the Person offending, it is very discernible to experienced Christians, who, from many Evidences, see that the Language of such a Person's *Heart* is, Why am I thus dealt with? Why are not my Prayers better answered? What does GOD see in me worse than others, that I should be thus singularly, or so long afflicted? Is there indeed in my Iniquities Guilt enough truly to deserve all the threatened Punishment present and future? Especially, can GOD justly hold me guilty for that Sin of my Nature which was brought upon me, not by my own personal Act, but by the Transgression of another? And here let it be observed, that such is many times discoverable to be the State of the *Spirit*, and the real Language of the *Heart*, while the *Mouth* shall be professing such a Sense of Vileness and Demerit, as to be frequently saying, "I wonder such a
" Wretch as I am out of Hell."

A Soul remaining in this Disposition remains evidently under a Disqualification for seeking and receiving the *free* Grace and Mercy of the Gospel. For to seek and receive Pardon and Mercy really, as such, does in the very Nature of the Thing imply a previous Acknowledgment in the Soul of *deserving* the threatened Punishment; for
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otherwise supposing the Punishment not to be inflicted, seeing it was not thought to be deserved, the not enduring the Punishment would not, and could not be received as an Act of mere Mercy and Grace, but must be deemed nothing more than an Allotment of Justice. So that the justifying of God, or a full Acknowledgment of the Righteousness of all his Judgments pronounced against us, or inflicted upon us, on account of Sin, is not only a material Branch of a true Conviction of our Sinfulness, but is indeed the supreme, consummating Part thereof, and the grand Point wherein the Evidence and Truth of Conviction consist. Let a Man consider that while he is indisposed to this essential Duty, while his Mind cannot consent to the Righteousness of all the divine Denunciations against Sin, he is actually charging God with Injustice and Cruelty for punishing Sin as he does; I say, let a Man consider this, and he will easily see, that there is a proud, self-exalting, unmortified Spirit within him, that presumes to be wiser and better than God, and therewith does effectually debar him from receiving that free Mercy of God which he is most ready to bestow upon all who come before him confessing their Deserts in the Spirit of the Publican, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*, Luke xviii. 13. acquitting him of all Severity, by saying, like these of old, from the Ground

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Ground of the Heart, *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us, for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly*, Neh. ix. 33. and in that most abased Language of David, *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this Evil in thy Sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest*, Psalm li. 4. An Exemplification precise and full of such an undisputing and practical Acknowledgment of the Desert of all Sin as is contained in these several Scriptures, is exhibited to us in the Case of the Prodigal Son: Where we see a Man come to himself; that is, brought to a Discovery of his real Situation, a guilty, demeritorious, ruinous one indeed; and under a deep, abiding Sense of it, resolving to own it all, but chiefly dwelling on his Vileness, and prefacing his Desires even of the most moderate Relief, with the fullest Confession of his absolute Want of Title to any; *Father, I have sinned—and am no more worthy to be called thy Son*, Luke xv. 11—21. The Marks therefore which difference this Spirit from that selfish and unhumbléd one before described, are directly opposed to the former, and ought greatly to be attended to.

1. As first, in Opposition to an unthankful Disposition, it fills the Soul with universal Thankfulness. Its Language is, *I am not worthy of the least of all the Mercies which thou*

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thou hast shewed unto thy Servant, Gen. xxxii.

10. *It is of the Lord's Mercies that we are not consumed, because his Compassions fail not, Lam. iii. 22. and the like.*

2. UNDER this Frame, instead of uneasy impatient Fretfulness, the Soul is greatly inclined to a meek Contentedness in waiting for the Lord's Mercies. *It is good, says the Soul, that a Man should both hope and quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord, Lam. iii.*

26. *Wait on the Lord; be of good Courage, and he shall strengthen thine Heart: wait, I say, on the Lord, Psalm xxvii. 14.*

3. IN Opposition to murmuring, it disposes the Heart to satisfiedness under present Allotments, however displeasing to Flesh and Blood, and whether they be of Providence or Grace. Under Corrections it dictates this Language, *Wherefore doth a living Man complain, a Man for the Punishment of his Sins? Lam. iii. 39.* In the Prospect of Judgment it suggests, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good, 1 Sam. iii. 18.* And in the cloudiest Seasons, and most trying Circumstances, when no way of Deliverance appears, it intimates a Plea for God; *Though Clouds and Darknes are round about him, Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne, Psal. xcvi. 2.*

3. THE third and last Effect of a divine Conviction mentioned in Scripture, is a Determination and Readiness of Mind to flee from

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from the Wrath to come, in accepting Salvation by any Means through which God shall be pleased to offer it.

UNTIL this State of Mind no one is brought who would be making any Compromises or Reservations whatsoever. To be ready in this Sense, must imply a resolute Determination to do, forbear, and suffer all Things which may be laid upon us in the Way of our Salvation. For a Man to say, I am under an unavoidable, insupportable Sentence of everlasting Death, and am most deservedly going to inherit it, unless the Mercy of God interpose in my Favour; while, in the mean time, he does not set himself to bear, and to do those Things which God expressly requires of him in order to his Salvation, affords an evident Discovery that he utters with his Lips what is not the real Persuasion of his Heart, and that he has not that Concern about these Matters which a divine Conviction necessarily implies. True Conviction of Sin brings a Man's Heart so low, that, in Opposition to his Pride, he is content to be received wholly as a pardoned Criminal; and, in Opposition to the Love of Sin that is in his Nature, is desirous by any means to be rid of it all at God's Command. The main Matters in regard to our Preparation for receiving Salvation are, that we should be willing to accept it as a free Gift purchased
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altogether by, and bestowed upon us for the Obedience and Blood of CHRIST, and yield ourselves to be made holy by his Grace. The former of which is not a Jot less contrary to our corrupt Nature than the latter. Indeed they both only issue from that one just Conviction of our total Guilt and Desert of Punishment, which alone prepares us to accept the free Pardon of our Sins, and by the Discovery of the Evil of them, inclines us to be willing to leave them. From hence it appears that a Man may easily judge about the Truth of his Conviction, I mean, by this practical Influence which it has upon his whole Heart and Life. To judge my Conviction sound, because in particular Seasons and Frames I am affected by an alarming and hateful Sight of my Iniquities, and seem determined at all Events to leave them, if at the same time my after Conduct be not in Correspondence herewith, is exceedingly dangerous, and to give myself up to Delusion. While on the other hand it is equally manifest that however weak and imperfect my Sense of Guilt, and of the Evil of Sin may seem to myself to be, yet if the one makes me habitually fly to CHRIST for the Justification of my Person through his Obedience unto Death, counting every thing Loss and Dung that I may be found in him; and the other engages me as my main Business to yield myself in all Things unto the

Will of GOD, exciting also a Desire and Endeavour to be more perfectly informed what his Will is; if it sets me to suspect, search out, and watch over my most sinful Heart, labouring to renounce every evil Thing either in that or in my outward Conduct: In such Case no doubt is to be made of my Preparation for all the Blessings of the Gospel. But the Spirit not truly convinced of Sin will be perpetually raising Objections to the Gospel in all its vital and essential Parts, which will effectually keep it from receiving it, or partaking of its Privileges. Here then we see the true Cause why of the Multitude that seem for a Time to make some shew of Religion so many fall away, *viz.* because their Hearts were never soundly convinced of Sin, nor consequently prepared for receiving CHRIST.

WE have now gone through the Points proposed, and hereupon it will probably be asked: Is no one prepared for the Gospel who has not all this exact particular Knowledge concerning Sin Original and Actual, together with this Conviction of its Guilt and Desert which you have been describing? We answer, that so much Knowledge of the Fact and Guilt of Original Sin, and of its Effects, as is requisite to convince us of our want of JESUS CHRIST, both for our Acceptance with GOD, and for bringing back our rebellious and apostate Hearts unto him, seems

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seems to be absolutely needful, because, without this we do in our Judgments of ourselves retain the Character of the *whole* that need not a Physician. But when the Spirit has gone thus far in discovering to us the Truth of our Case, as corrupt, fallen, and in ourselves lost and helpless Creatures, and has begotten in us a determined Abhorrence of Sin, although we have not yet attained unto an exact Knowledge of Corruption in all its Branches and all its subtil and secret Workings, there is no room to doubt that the Conviction is effectual, for it proves itself to be so, because it engages the Soul readily to accept of CHRIST for the two main Ends of his Undertaking, *viz.* our Justification and Sanctification. A due Discovery of the Fact of Sin is indeed necessary because we cannot judge ourselves guilty, or deserving to be punished for the Sin which we know not we are chargeable with. And this Discovery must be of Sin Original as well as Actual, so far forth as to make us sensible we are altogether condemned in God's Sight, and are in need both of an inward and outward Change. To farther Discoveries of our inward Man, and of the Guilt and Evil of Sin, the Holy Spirit, in our diligent use of the Scriptures, Self-Examination and Prayer, together with our comparing the Sin that we see in others with the work-ings

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ings of our own Heart, and conferring with Persons of more Experience, will lead us on by little and little; tho' in the mean time we shall never, while we are in this World, attain unto the Knowledge of all that Myftery of Iniquity that dwelleth in our Flesh. *The Heart is deceitful above all Things and desperately wicked, who can know it?* Nor shall we be able to see more than a Glimpse of the real and enormous Guilt and Evil of Sin. But that which is of the greatest Moment to be searched into in this Matter is, whether a competent Discovery of the Fact of Sin be accompanied with such a real Conviction of our Guilt and Desert of Punishment on Account of it, as makes us ready to receive Mercy thro' any means. Where Conviction of our Guilt and Desert of Punishment, with this Readiness of Mind accompanying them, are not, there, whatever perfect and most exact speculative Knowledge there may be of the Apostasy of our Nature, the Soul still remains in an unconvinced and consequently unconverted Estate. That Soul only comes to God in a right Temper, that approaches him in the Spirit of the Publican, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*, and falling down with the truly humbled Saul says, without reserve, *Lord, What wilt thou have me to do?*

F I N I S.

